

**Political History Collection  
Interview H.0033.02 : Tape 2**

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**Location of Interview:** Lhasa, China  
**Date of Interview:** 1993  
**Language of Interview:** Tibetan  
**Interviewed by:** Melvyn Goldstein and Tashi Tsering  
**Name:** Phüntso Yügye [Tib. phun tshogs g.yul rgyal]  
**Gender:** Male  
**Age:** ca. 61  
**Date of Birth:** ca. 1932

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## **Abstract**

Phüntso Yügye [Tib. phun tshogs g.yul rgyal] was from a miser family and was conscripted into the Dalai Lama's dance troupe. He later became a clerk in the Tseja Office. In this interview, he talks about the uprising in Norbulinga and his participation in it and his arrest. He details his detention in the Military Headquarters for 3 days and 3 nights without food and water, and his later imprisonment in Norbulinga. He discusses how he later worked in the Ngachen Power Station, and then was released for medical reasons and sent to a labor camp in Kongpo, and how he was then sent to Nangkartse and Gyantse to work in the Military Headquarters' State Farms. Additionally, he describes the discipline and conditions of the labor camps.

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## **Tape 2**

**A:** Taring [Tib. phreng ring] was carrying 3 cameras and was photographing inside Norbulinga wherever something was destroyed.

**Q:** I also heard about this, he was really tough.

**A:** I thought he was really doing good as a Tibetan government official. Then I went to the temple of Mahakala [Tib. mgon po] and made an offering and prayed well and then I went out. Normally, they would not let us in, but at that time it was free. Then it became evening and I couldn't go back home and I stayed overnight in Norbulinga. Actually, I couldn't stay still because of the gunshots. Some people were saying, "The Chinese are coming." The Chinese spies probably might have entered Norbulinga. Actually, the Chinese hadn't arrived inside Norbulinga. The people were running away back and forth. Shit! I swear by the Three Jewels! What the hell kind of war was it?

**Q:** On the first day, the Chinese didn't send their soldiers, right? They probably hadn't sent the soldiers on the 11th.

**A:** On the next day, I don't remember the date.

**Q:** On the evening of the 11th nothing happened, right?

**A:** Nothing happened. They were still shooting guns and sometimes firing canons. Most of the canons were fired at the Potala. On the next day, the 12th, it was said that from Dekyilinga where the traders were, that the ammunition was running out. They came to get ammunition, but they had to go get the ammunition to the bodyguard regiment down there and they were told to go there. I didn't go to the regiment. Then when I went down I met Kungö Tara [Tib. rta ra] Tenzin Chönyi [Tib. bstan 'dzin chos nyid].

**Q:** Was that on the 12th?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** There was a lot of fighting between Böpa [Tib. bod pa] [people from the central and western Tibet] and Khambas over getting the horses in Norbulinga to escape to Lhoka, since they needed horse to cross the river. There was killing back and forth over this. A friend of his fled from Jokpori to Norbulinga and said that when he arrived, there was a meeting in the New Palace (Tib. Tagten Mingyur [rtag brtan mi 'gyur]). There was a group of Kudrak and one drunyichemmo was saying to them that "I said many times don't make war and now we have war and the Chinese are shelling us. It makes no sense to keep the doors locked. We should open them and those who want to flee should flee and those who want to fight should fight. I am not fleeing. I will stay here and

commit suicide."

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I was there because my lord was at the meeting. I took my lord and told him "Don't stay here, let's flee." This was on the first day. Trindor said he thinks the Chinese had taken Norbulinga by a little after noon. The Chinese took Jokpori first. One of my friends was on Jokpori at Senge Namyang [Tib. seng ge gnam g.yang] with some Ganden monk volunteers and some Dewashung [Tib. sde pa gzhung] people. He said we didn't get a chance to fire at the Chinese since the canons were fired too much, so we all fled without firing. They had bunkers, but still they couldn't stay. His friend had fled down from Jokpori to the Linga at the west of Jokpori and when he got there, Kundeling dzasa [Tib. dza sag] said to go back to Jokpori, but that was impossible as the Chinese had taken the high places and were firing down with bren-guns. Then when it was hopeless, he said, "I have good news for you. Don't worry. The Dalai Lama has fled the day before and got away." So his friend said we all lost our enthusiasm for war. This group then fled through the marshy area [Tib. 'dam ra] to Nyangral and from Nyangral over the pass to Phembo, and then to Tsazhol in Drigung [Tib. 'bri gung]. And then to Lhoka and India. There were a lot of airplanes strafing in Phembo. There was also a lot of fighting over guns. Some Khambas without guns would steal those of the Böpa with guns and they even saw some people who were killed by the Khambas after taking the guns. If there were only a few Böpas, the Amdo and Khambas would attack them for their guns and bullets. Along the way there was a group of 100 Amdos who were blocking the road telling people to go back and fight. Our group had about 6 people and we put them up in the hills and sent one to talk with the Amdo head. We said, "We have fought in Norbulinga and we are Kudrak and we are going to India so let us go through. If you won't, we will fight you." The Amdo let them through. Then at the border there were other Khambas who said, "Unless you have a badge from Norbulinga we won't let you through." Then on the second day, I met Tarala and he said, "Did you come down? How was the situation at the Potala? I said, "There was heavy shelling and the shells fell in the Deyangshar [Tib. sde yangs shar] Courtyard like planting radishes, and the shells just dug a pit over there when it exploded. But many of the shells didn't explode."

**Q:** A lot of the shells didn't explode. If all exploded, then it might have made a great deal of damage, right?

**A:** It just took off some of the floor. Otherwise, it didn't make much damage.

**Q:** It might be because the Arka floor is very tough.

**A:** Trindor: In Ramoche there were soldiers and police, and Lama Gyüpa monks and masses. The Chinese fired a lot of artillery at Ramoche. There were about 200-300 Tibetans there. There was a Chinese office right by it.

**A:** I told him, "There were about 800-900 unexploded shells that landed in Deyangshar in the Potala area. A lot of shells hit the Red Palace. Sometimes I couldn't see it due to the smoke."

**Q:** What time was that?

**A:** It was in the afternoon.

**Q:** It was on the first day, right?

**A:** Yes. On the next day, I went with Tarala back to Senge Namyang [Tib. sen ge gnam g.yang], the rock above where the thousand Buddhas were carved on the rock on Jokpori.

**Q:** It is at the back side of Jokpori, right?

**A:** Yes. There were Trapchi Regiment soldiers stationed on the Jokpori. Tsenden Tashi [Tib. tshe brtan bkra shis], Tarala and I were with about 20 Gusung [Bodyguard Regiment] soldiers. They had 3 bren-guns and ammunition. Tarala carried a pistol and he was wearing the Tshalchuma chupa gown, and a knit hat and woolen boots. He told us to come and he said, "You don't need to be afraid. If you are afraid, just hide behind me." We mounted three bren-guns at three places. Right at that time, from below, the Chinese were coming with armored cars. Then we were told to fire nine times continuously.

**Q:** From which direction they were coming?

**A:** They were coming from the Magsor Dophung [Tib. dmag zor rdo phung], the stones piled on the Lingkor [Tib. gling skor] circumambulation road. Near the stream.

**Q:** They had crossed the stream right?

**A:** Of course. The [PLA] soldiers were sent from the Military Headquarters along the Lingkor road. There were 11-12 armored cars, and behind this there were troops some crouching and some crawling. Then our soldiers were ordered to fire and they fired the bren-gun and it was full of dust, and the Chinese were also shooting. We fired towards them and the troops had to go back. So like this we stopped them. Then after about an hour, the armored cars came again. Tarala was giving orders on where to fire and they ran away again. On that occasion we could stop them and we didn't let a single Chinese come up.

**Q:** How many armored cars were there at one time?

**A:** Probably, there were 12. There were several thousands of Chinese soldiers. Some of them were coming while bending their bodies and some of them were crawling. They were wearing cotton padded uniforms, so they looked just like vultures. [Tarala] was very courageous and I was happy. He stood up and said, "Shoot there." And he was also shooting. I was also kind proud and I fired a bren-gun as I had learned earlier. I really liked firing it, moving my buttock back and forth and firing. I felt very happy. I told the soldiers to bring me the cartridges and they said, "Yes." This was the bren-gun that took the bullets from the top. Then I stopped firing and came up. Then Tarala went to Norbulinga and I went back to Shöl.

**Q:** What time was it then?

**A:** It was in the evening. Then, in general, it was finished and it started to calm down. Those who fled had gone and many wounded were there. The wounded were mostly calling for water.

**Q:** Nobody took care of the wounded, right?

**A:** Yes. All of them wanted water to drink. Then I went to the Shöl main gate and from there they were shooting a lot from the gun holes of the bunkers in the Tibet Autonomous Region area, so we couldn't stay still there. The painter Ngagnam, who was nicknamed "deer" [Tib. shwa ba yu mo], had a bren-gun. I said that I would fire the gun and I fired a bren-gun from there while he was loading the cartridges. When he was firing, I loaded the cartridges. We fired a lot. The Chinese were firing from the bunker in Yuthok [Tib. g.yu thog] House. We also fired towards the Tibet Autonomous Region enclosure a lot. We couldn't see anyone where we were firing, but they were firing back.

**Q:** Maybe you were unable to shoot a single person, right?

**A:** I swear by the Three Jewels that I didn't have any idea about that because it was like throwing stones in the ocean. We were just targeting the bunkers and firing. If some people would come out we could shoot them.

**Q:** Actually, people didn't see any People's Liberation Army soldiers for two days, right?

**A:** In fact the only People's Liberation Army soldiers I saw that day were those below Jokpori. The people using the binoculars said that there were Khambas on the canon hill [Tib. me sgyogs ri] or Jakyag Karpo [Tib. bya skyag dkar po] on the other side of the river at the Ramagang ferry site. Actually, they were false Khambas. They were Chinese who were wearing fox-caps and blue chupas. I saw them in Shöl when we surrendered. I thought we couldn't do anything and I had the thought of fleeing.

**Q:** Was that in the evening of the 12th ?

**A:** Yes. On that evening the fighting kind of stopped. Some people were killed and some of them had fled. I went to Shöl Khensur [Tib. mkhan zur] and there was Jangjan Lokhog Kubgo Magji and Tsarong Kungö, and 7-8 government officials. They were wearing woolen gowns and had covered their knees with a kind of blanket. Did they look like people making war? In front, there were some soldiers who wouldn't let me in and they had mounted a bren-gun there and also on the roof. I had a fight with them about this and told them, "Why don't you let our own people in?" I was very agitated and then they let me pass.

I asked them, "Are you officials staying here and enjoying yourselves? Norbulinga is finished and the Potala is finished. What are you going to do?" The liar Jangjan Lokhog Magji said, "Oh! Jola, it doesn't matter, this evening American troops are going to be parachuted down." He was the Commander-in-Chief and co-worker with Lhalu [Tib. lha klu].

**Q:** Did you ask them, 'What are you doing?'

**A:** Yes. Usually, we wouldn't dare to say that, but I was agitated and spoke like this. The Magji said, "It has already been announced on the radio that the Americans will airdrop soldiers." Then I said, "The hell with the American airdropping soldiers. Now it is finished. I swear by the Three jewels that you shouldn't stay like this. You have to do something." Then a Trapchi soldier named Lhagjung [Tib. lhag chung] came for me. He was my servant who was carrying bullets. He said, "Please come in." I said, "There is nothing to come for. Didn't you see them staying there?" That night Jangjan Lokhog and everyone fled from that place, except Tsarong.

**Q:** Tsarong was still there, right?

**A:** Yes. The stupid one was staying there. On the 13th, Tsarong and my mother went with a white Khata to surrender at Yuthok. I just made my bedding and went to sleep. The main gate of my house was barricaded with wool loads. The Palanquin carrier of the Dalai Lama [Tib. phebs byams pa], Dresong Tamdrinla [Tib. bgres song rta mgrin lags], didn't open the gate although I told them, "Lets go out. What is the use of staying inside?"

**Q:** At that time, Tamdrinla was living in your house, right?

**A:** Yes. And Shölpa Tatongpa [Tib. rta gtong pa], the person in charge of sending corvée horses, was also staying there. The two of them were in the people's representative of Shöl. I was thinking of opening the main Shöl gate and going to attack Yuthok and destroy the bunker in Yuthok. Some of them could shoot [Tib. dgu shog] nine times at the same time and some could charge. While the people were firing machine guns, the others could charge in. He said "Don't do that." Later, the people said that they want to hold struggle sessions against me saying that I opened the main gate and said that I was going to destroy the bunker in Yuthok. It was true, I said that. Then, it was finished and the Chinese came.

**Q:** Was that in the morning of the 13th?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Did you think of fleeing to India?

**A:** After Jangjan Lokhog fled, I also fled. But the elephant house at the back side of the Potala was full of Chinese soldiers. I had carried the bren-gun and changed the old bren-gun with a new one. There were a lot new bren-guns at the back door of the Potala. When I tried to fire the new one, the firing pin had been taken out.

**Q:** Who took out the needles?

**A:** Our soldiers took them out. They were supposed to make it useless in case they were lost . At the upper back gate [Tib. rta lam gong mo] of the Potala, I was almost killed when I was coming up carrying a bren-gun and the Chinese fired bren-guns from down there. I brought Changtshang Lhakpa [Tib. chang tshang lhag pa] with me. We were going to flee through the marshy area and Nyangral Nang and cross the Phembo Gola Pass, but at that time there was no way to flee because there were [PLA] soldiers in the Lukhang [Tib. klu khang] at the back side of the Potala, so we went back.

I felt thirsty and went to drink the offering water in the Temple of Avalokitaswara [Tib. 'phags pa lo ki sho ra]. I told the stupid lay official of Namseling [Tib. nram sras gling] to give me some water offering and I drank it from a silver bowl. He said, "This is ridiculous! How can you drink from the silver bowl?" I said, "Don't say nonsensical things, people are going to die from thirst." Then I threw the bowl away. I was very agitated. After that he was following me, like watching me. Then I told him, "Lay Official! Aren't you a person who consorts with the enemy? If you are, I am going to kill you. If you are capable, why don't you go to bring water to the soldiers in the assembly hall."

In the Potala's assembly hall or Tsomjen [Tib. tshom chen], the wounded soldiers and monks were there. Many of these were crying and pleading to be killed, and asking to hit them on the head with a stone, etc. All of them were saying, "Bring me some water." Some of them were dead. I brought a bag of tsamba and butter tea pots for 10-11 of them. Actually, we were going to surrender the next morning. But at that time, we were not supposed to surrender. Then I went down from the Potala to Shöl Tregang. At that time, Changtshang Lhakpa almost killed me when his gun went off accidentally. The bullet went off just near my ear. I thought that he might have shot me so I asked him, "What the hell are you doing?" He said, "Oh! the gun went off accidentally." Then I went home had some beer and went to sleep.

**Q:** This was on the evening of the 12th, right?

**A:** Yes. The next day Tsarong and my wife's mother went with 7-8 people to Yuthok where the Party Committee [Ch. qu dang wei] of the Tibet Autonomous Region was held to give up. The next morning the People's Liberation Army came and told us to come out with our weapons and swords. At that time, my mother was in her seventies. Then the Chinese said, "All of the men should come out and bring all the guns and swords. If you don't hand over the weapons, we are going to kill you." They had already mounted a bren-gun on my roof. I didn't know when they got there. Later, I came to know that the soldiers came down from the Potala. Otherwise, all the gates of Shöl were closed barricaded with wool loads and rocks.

[Trindor: The Chinese first said, "Do you have guns? 'chang yomeyo [Ch. qiang you mei you]" and we said no since we thought it mean drinking beer [Tib. chang]. Then the Chinese said, "Jagaw solas" [Ch. jia hua shuo le] (you are lying) but Tibetans understood the iron pot [Tib. lcags khog] for boiling the chang and said yes we have jagaw."]

Then I went down carrying my machine pistol [Tib. sbag sbag lan khru]. The uncle of Garjang sent their servant to hand over 16 guns.

**Q:** Where was the uncle?

**A:** He was there, but he didn't come out to fire a single shot. I said, "This stupid guy."

**Q:** His brother-in law was a monk official and he had to stay in prison for many years.

**A:** He stayed for 18 years in the prison though he didn't fire a single shot. They had 13-14 guns. They should have given them to other people, but they didn't. He was a stingy person. When I told them to go out to fight, he said, "No, we shouldn't go, we will be killed." When I told him, "Let's go to fight, he said, "No."

I fought in the battle, but I was released in 6 months. I was arrested with Tsarong and taken to Lubu Nade [Tib. klu sbug na sder] with Muja [Tib. mu bya] depön etc. I had a Gau amulet made from 12 tola of gold and it had the clay statues made by the Dalai Lama and Lama's robe and hairs, and the teeth of Tsongkapa.

**Q:** I don't think you had the teeth of Tsongkapa.

**A:** I swear by the Three Jewels that I had that. I got that when Ganden Monastery was renovated and our monk official was one of the staff. So I got it.

**Q:** It was like stolen, right?

**A:** Yes. I also had the 5 rosaries that belonged to the 5th Dalai Lama. I myself stole this when they were storing things in the Namgen [Tib. gnam gan] storage in the Potala. The Chinese took my amulet, earrings, turquoise earring and the tassels, buttons of my chupa and boot straps and everything.

Then I was shut alone in an iron box like cell with a small door. It was in the Rear Service Department of the Military Headquarters [Ch. jun qu hou qing]. The iron cell was dark. There was a small hole to put out the bowl. There was no carpet and for 3 days and nights they gave me nothing to drink. I was extremely hungry and I felt burning in my stomach.

**Q:** Did they give food?

**A:** No way. No water, let alone food.

**A:** Trindor: I got no food for 2 days, but we could drink from the yurbu [irrigation canal].

**A:** For the first 2 days I was hungry, but then I kind of forgot the hunger and I was only thirsty. I thought they were going to starve us

to death so I said my prayers. I banged on the door a lot, but no one paid attention.

After 3 days and nights, at noon, I was unable to get up, so I crawled. I had on velvet boots and kicked the door. They spoke to me, but I couldn't hear the words and just heard a sound like a dog barking.

**Q:** You were too hungry and had a kind of depression.

**A:** Then 2 soldiers came and they talked to each other. I tried to get up, but I fell down. They shackled me and took me outside. There was some water from washing clothes flowing in a small canal and I was able to get 2 mouthfuls from it, but then the soldiers dragged me away by my hair. Then I became better and thought now I won't die. Then I couldn't walk and they kind of dragged me away and I was put together with many of the Tibetan government official prisoners. There we got meals with 5-6 kinds of dishes. It was like a party. It was so false [Tib. ma bin]. The Kudraks said, "Don't eat too much, just eat a bit or you will die." So I mostly drank and ate only a little. Even though I wanted to eat, the food didn't go into my throat. So I just drank water. Then I was taken to Norbulinga in a car with three soldiers and a driver. They were holding the gun like this. I thought, "His father's corpse [Tib. abey ro] Where the hell are they going to take me?" I thought they would shut me in a very bad prison. There were many prisoners in the regiment in Norbulinga.

**A:** Trindor: I think the Junqu (Military Headquarters) was for prisoners of 4th rank and over]. They took me to the Bodyguard Regiment of the Dalai Lama, the Gusung Magar. [Trindor was there.] In the evening we were locked up but in daytime we had to sit in lines like monks. At night if you had to go urinate, you had to yell to a guard, but many couldn't get out since [there were] too many bodies. They urinated in their mug and then ate from it. There was no bedding or quilts.

**Q:** We were there.

**A:** We sat in rows of 100 people and stayed outside even at night.

**A:** Trindor: Then they said for all Khambas to get up. There were about 250 of them. They were put in truck and sent to China. Most died there. In the day, while we sat, one of the prisoners had to read us the newspaper.

**Q:** Did you have cushions?

**A:** Shit! That was out of question. We got a bread that was dropped from planes and was hard and had to be broken with a rock. We also got tea [black] three times.

**Q:** I was there at that time. We didn't have enough food to eat.

**A:** Trindor's group got rice porridge. He was a prisoner also. There were about 1,000 or so there. We had no Kudrak or Khambas. There were monks and servants and regular people.

**Q:** Did they interrogate you about what you did?

**A:** They didn't so we were happy.

**A:** TT: At that time, they were differentiating the Khambas.

**Q:** Was that on the 13th?

**A:** TT: It was around the 15-20th. I came to Norbulinga on the 14th.

**Q:** When was Ramoche lost?

**A:** TT: Ramoche was lost on the 12th and the Jokhang was lost on the 13th. When Ramoche was lost, I wasn't arrested. I was arrested the next day. On the 14th. We were shut up in Bönshö House. They didn't arrest me on the day Ramoche was lost, saying I was a child. They arrested me on the next day on the 13th.

**A:** Trindor: There were many people and no one asked anything. Maybe there were too few officials to interrogate all. There were some trying to find people. Someone would walk around saying is so and so here. Then a worker from the Mentsigang [Tib. sman rtsis khang], the Tibetan Medical Astrological Institute who did the calendars, went into trance and was saying things we couldn't make out. I was taken on the 13th and then on the 14th, I was sent to Norbulinga. At first I was in Bönshö for one day. Then after a few days in Norbulinga, I was sent to Nortölinga to plant fields, and then after a few days, I was sent back to Norbulinga. Then I was sent to the Power Station in Ngachen.

**Q:** Did they know who you were?

**A:** No, in my neighborhood they rounded up all the males -- in our group of 200 or so, there were 6 youths who were 13 or 14 years old. When we got to Ngachen, they asked us about who we were, etc. They told us that we committed no crimes and were not in the revolt, so on August 31st, they released us as prisoners and we were put into the Labor Camp [Tib. las mi ru khag].

On the 12th afternoon, after taking Ramoche they told everyone in the courtyard to come out of the house. Then they shot into the house to get people still hiding there. That evening, some People's Liberation Army troops stayed in our house, and the next morning they said the household head should come. My father and our bridegroom had already been taken so I went as the household head. They searched our storeroom and then upstairs there were some guns and a bunker made by the [Tibetan] police, so they were suspicious and told me to come with them. That's how I got taken.

After we came to Norbulinga, we had to stay on the open plain for days and nights.

**Q:** How long did you stay like that?

**A:** I was kept in Norbulinga for 2 months. After about 10 days, they started interrogating us. "Were you forcibly taken [Tib. btsan 'khrid] or were you a volunteer in the revolt? Or were you not involved in the revolt?" They told us to confess. Garpön [Tib. Pasang Thöndrup [Tib. pa sangs don grub]] [the head of the dance troupe], Dawa Thöndrup [Tib. zla ba thon drub], Migöla [Tib. mid rgod lags] and all of them were there. Drebu Yülkha Olo [Tib. 'bras bu g.yul kha o lo] was also there.

**Q:** How many were there?

**A:** There were probably about 2-3000.

**Q:** They differentiated over 200 Khambas and sent them to Gansu, China. At that time, they differentiated the Khambas and the middle class Tibetan government officials and they were sent to China.

**Q:** Were the Khambas regarded as the people who committed the most serious crime?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Garpön was also sent to China, right?

**A:** At that time, he hadn't been sent yet.

**Q:** TT: The main questioning was about who started the revolt. I knew that we should say that the Kashag started the revolt, but many didn't know the answer was the Kashag and said the Korchagpa [Lhasa messengers] started it. Some said Galingshar Ane [Tib. dga' gling shar a ne] started it and some said the Khambas started it. Nobody said the Kashag started the revolt.

**A:** They taught us the political lessons. We had to read the letters that had been between Tan Guansan and the Dalai Lama. At this time, they were saying that the Dalai Lama was taken by force. I was appointed as the head of a hundred prisoners [Tib. gyagpön].

**A:** Trindor: There were jupön, dingpön, and gyagpön [appointed] among the prisoners. They were the conduits for messages.

**A:** As I was Gyagpön, I read them. At first there was an cadre named Ngoyu who didn't read well, so he read as Tayan Gunya, Seyan, etc. when he read Tan Guansan [letter], and people laughed and didn't listen. He appointed me as the gyagpön and made me read it [to the others].

**Q:** What did you think at this time?

**A:** They were saying that the Chinese were not to be blamed for starting the revolt, but Tibetans were. When we were asked who was the ring leader of the revolt, all said, "It was Chushigandru." They asked me, "Who started the revolt?" I said, "How can we know who started the revolt? Some people were saying the Chinese started it and some people were saying that the Tibetan started it. I don't know."

**Q:** Actually, it was said that the Chinese started it.

**A:** I said, "If you ask me who started firing the canons, it was the Chinese. I myself heard that."

**A:** Trindor: No way. The Chinese were to blame.

**A:** One person called Jambey Kelsang [Tib. 'jam dpal skal bzang] Jogtang's brother said in trying to please Chinese, "When the canons started with the sound "ding" it was like the sun rose at the place called Dinyishar in Shöl and I felt like seeing a brightness." I said, "You mother fucker! Don't tell lies. Why the hell are you talking about the sun rising? You came here in prison. Did the sun rise here." He said, "No, it's good to say this because they will free us earlier." He was tricky and I was angry.

Then they asked who had volunteered in revolt. The first was the Budawa [Tib. bu zla ba] from Thelphung Gang Tsenkhang [Tib. thal phung sgang btsan khang]. I was the second who rose. They told us to stay there and then Garpön, Migmar Gökye [Tib. mig dmar rgod skyes] and all of them followed me. Only about 17 out of 2,000 rose to say yes to this. All the others said that they were abducted and not involved in the revolt.

After we got back to the prison, Garpön and Dawa Thöndrup scolded me. "Usually, you are the most brave one, and today, you rose first when they said the volunteers should come out." I said, "Would it be helpful if we covered our heads when the day broke? I was really a volunteer. Nobody called me by force. I myself went there for the issue of Tibet. Who told you to follow me? Why did you follow me. I will think for myself." They just followed me. But when we got back they were struggling with me. There was a horse seller among us who had brought a packet of cigarette called Number 10. I told him, "Please sell me a packet and I paid a hundred srang note. When I smoked the cigarette, I was so happy. When I swallowed the smoke, I coughed because this was the first time I smoked after the revolt.

30-40 people smoked a piece of cigarette. Some people smoked tea leaves and some people picked up some residue of tobacco thrown by the bodyguard soldiers, and some left over snuff in the snuff-box and mixed it with tea leaves and smoked it. We didn't have cups and we were not given cups. I got a bed pan from the bodyguard soldiers for my cup. It was very helpful for holding tea and drinking water.

**A:** TT: We had to get some bottles and cut them in half to make glasses. We would rub a string on it until it got hot and then pour cold water on it and it would crack evenly. We were cold at night when we slept outside.

**Q:** It was cold outside, right?

**A:** TT: The weather was cold, but we didn't feel that cold because there were many people.

**Q:** Didn't you have cups?

**A:** TT: If they had to give cups it would be like having no end in sight because there were too many people.

**A:** TT: I got a cup. Some of the cadres I knew probably gave it to me. I used to eat food in and urinate in at night. We didn't have bedding.

**A:** If you went outside, the guards would pull their triggers and there were many guards.

**Q:** Didn't you feel cold outside?

**A:** TT: The weather was cold, but we didn't feel that cold.

**Q:** When you had to urinate, what did you have to do?

**A:** We had to shout to the soldiers, but we couldn't get out because there were too many people. At that time, we were given black tea three times and some dried bread dropped from a plane.

**Q:** Who dropped it from the plane?

**A:** The Chinese soldiers themselves. We were given the bread which was hard and salty.

**Q:** It saved you from dying from starvation, right?

**A:** Yes, though it was barely enough to be full. A group of soldiers from the bodyguard regiment and the Trapchi (regiment) were sent to burn corpses near the northern gate of Norbulinga. It took one week to burn them all. I heard that when the corpses were burned, the stomachs exploded with the sound, "bo." There was a very bad odor.

In the revolt so many Chinese soldiers were killed, but they didn't leave a single corpse. They were carried away right after they were killed. At that time, the Tibetans were really stupid. We didn't have a hospital for the wounded. And they didn't have salary and tsamba to pay to the people. So how were they making war? So they had to rob from one's own people. Therefore, they [the people] didn't like them. The Tibetan government's work was like that. If they wanted to make war, they should make it well. From the top, it was not well done.

**Q:** Did you know when the Dalai Lama left?

**A:** Yes. It was on the 8th. Shöpa Tatongba [Tib. zhol pa rta gtong pa] told me that he had left that night. He was one of the representatives in the meeting.

**Q:** All the representatives knew that?

**A:** That was a secret. Only some of the representative knew that. He came to my home and said that the Dalai Lama had left. Actually, nobody knew that.

**Q:** That was on the 8th, right?

**A:** Yes, he said the Dalai Lama left at night. Nobody knew about that. But I knew it.

**Q:** What did you think at that time?

**A:** I was also supposed to go, but I couldn't go. Therefore, I thought now it was finished, but it was alright because the Dalai Lama could leave and there was no problem on the way. There were Tibetan soldiers stationed. I also knew about that. I also knew that the Chushigandru were also stationed over there. I thought that if we lost here, it didn't matter if the Dalai Lama could go there. And I prayed, "May he not have a problem on the way."

**Q:** Some people said that when the Dalai Lama left, he left a letter saying he was going temporarily, and that we were going to set up a temporary government and Tibet was independent. Did you hear about this?

**A:** There was talk about this. That he was going to India and from there to work for independence and make the relations and we would do something over here.

**Q:** Was he going to India or Lhoka?

**A:** He was going to Lhoka.

**Q:** Did he mean that he was going to set up a new government in Lhoka?

**A:** Yes. After the Dalai Lama left, I didn't know where he had arrived and things like that because we were arrested.

**Q:** I am sure that the Chinese knew at once when Dalai Lama left.

**A:** After we got in the prison in Norbulinga, I heard that when the Chinese soldiers entered Norbulinga, they told the people to take off their hats as they were searching for the Dalai Lama.

**Q:** That is probably not true.

**A:** I swear by the Three Jewels that they told me this.

**Q:** You mean on the 13th, right?

**A:** Yes, after the war was lost and when people surrendered. All of the people in Norbulinga were made to take off their hats. I heard that the Chinese were searching for the Dalai Lama. This means they didn't know that he left. They knew later on and they sent a plane.

**Q:** After you stayed 2 months in Norbulinga, then what happened?

**A:** Then I was sent to Ngachen [Tib. nga chen]. I had a very hard time there. I had sores on my back from carrying the baskets.

**Q:** Did they send the prisoners in batches? How many people were there?

**A:** The day when I was sent to Ngachen there were 300 of us who all were volunteers, 150 monks and 150 laymen. We were doing rock work inside the mountain range and it was very hard. And they had put two fences of barbed wire up.

**Q:** TT: They were the prisoners who were more strict and we were slightly looser.

**A:** At that time, they had attached electricity to the wires. So there was no way to go out.

**Q:** In the end, how many people were there?

**A:** We had 300 people.

**Q:** Did they ask you whether you were a volunteer [to join the revolt]?

**A:** Yes, they did.

**Q:** Did they interrogate you about your crimes?

**A:** Yes, they did. There were 7-8 female translators for interrogating the prisoners.

**Q:** Were they Tibetan?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** They must have been from Xianyang [the minority school].

**A:** There were about 2,000 prisoners in the place where we were working.

**A:** TT: Probably, in November of that year, I was released.

**Q:** How many of you were released at that time from among the 300 people?

**A:** Probably 18-19 people were released. Before that, although I was a prisoner, they called me to the headquarters [Tib. bka' bkod khang] located just above Garpa. The Dalai Lama's Mongolian tent was there. Inside, it was lined with tiger skins. I was working with Shölkhang Targye [Tib. dar rgyas]. I was told to read the praises of the workers. Dargye la composed the praise and I typed them. We were very happy for about a month.

**Q:** They called you to work there, right?

**A:** Yes. After that I was told to teach them the Dramnyen instrument and they made the girls dance.

**Q:** A foreign inspection group came to that place, right?

**A:** I was very happy for a month. This was because the Senior Brigade Leader [Ch. da dui zhang] of Ngachen was called Baba Legshey [Tib. 'ba' pa legs bshad]. He was the leader of 10,000 people working in Ngachen. He used to be the teacher of the soldiers of the Bodyguard Regiment of the Dalai Lama. He knew me and he used to call me at night and gave me liquor in a mug surreptitiously, and he told me to go to sleep. He had 3-4 servants or guards. When he called me he would say, "Come on in [Tib. kas yar shog] ." But when I entered, I swear by the Three Jewels that he gave me liquor. He sent me to the headquarters. He didn't send me to Shöl to hold struggle sessions. Otherwise, the people in Shöl said that they were going to kill me.

**Q:** That's mean, you got a back door to go through, right?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** It was a very good coincidence. Otherwise, you had committed a serious crime, right?



**A:** Yes, by the grace of the Three Jewels, I didn't die, I was happy. At the beginning, I had a very hard time when I had sores on my back. When I had sores on this side of my back, I had to carry the basket on the other side. Then I had to carry it in the front and I also got sores in the front. When something touched the sores, I had pains in my heart. We had to carry 500 full baskets of stone per day.

**Q:** The basket must not be big, right?

**A:** They were fully loaded with stones.

**Q:** Trindor: There were 12 people in the tent, all of them had sores on their back except me. I was just a child, so I didn't have sores on my back.

**A:** After I had sores on my back and front, I was told to carry big rocks with poles on my shoulder with those very strong Chinese Guomindang prisoners who came from Fujian and who were said to be military officers like Gyagpön.

**Q:** What they were doing there?

**A:** They were also prisoners.

**Q:** What was the use of bringing prisoners of Guomindang there?

**A:** That is exactly what the Chinese were doing. You don't understand that. They would not leave the prisoner in the place where they belong. Some of the Tibetan prisoners were sent to Gansu. This was sort of like expelling them. That's what they were deliberately doing.

**Q:** Some of the Tibetan prisoners were also sent to Kongpo, right?

**A:** I was sent to Kongpo, this is just near by. The stronger ones were sent to dig borax. This was after I was released and became the labor camp member [Tib. las mi ru khag] and sent to Kongpo to work on a State Farm.

**Q:** The worst ones were sent to Gansu, right?

**A:** The lay and monk officials, Khambas and the clerks like Garpönla were sent to Gansu.

**Q:** They were ones who committed serious crimes, right?

**A:** Not really the people who committed serious crimes.

**Q:** From among the prisoners in Ngachen, the weaker ones were sent to Kongpo. People like me were sent to dig borax.

**A:** My name was on the list of people going to dig borax.

**Q:** At that time, was it said that there were 10,000 prisoners in the whole area of Lhasa?

**A:** Yes. This did not include the prisoners in the Military Headquarters. I mean, this was the number of prisoners working in Ngachen.

**Q:** The prisoners who were in the Military Headquarters were the real aristocrats. It was probably for those above the fourth rank.

**A:** This was not above the fourth rank.

**Q:** There were just a few prisoners over there, right?

**A:** There were also the military officers above the Battalion Leader, Rupön.

**A:** The other rubbish [Tib. dza re dzo re] ones were sent to Gansu.

**Q:** How many prisoners did they send to Gansu?

**A:** I heard that when they were sent to Gansu, there were 57 trucks and many prisoners jumped from the trucks. When they came back there were 6 trucks.

**Q:** Usually, they would put 25 people in a truck.

**A:** The rest of the prisoners died from starvation. People like Garpön La were returned dead.

**Q:** Were there any people who came from Gansu?

**A:** Garpön was one of them.

**Q:** The 57 trucks sent to Gansu were not included in the 10,000 prisoners, right?

**A:** Yes, 10,000 were only the prisoners who were in Ngachen.

**Q:** Were there Khambas among them?

**A:** Yes.

**A:** TT: There weren't any Khambas among them. People like Kunga la [Tib. kun dga' lags] were in Ngachen, but he didn't say that he was a Khamba. The Khambas who said that they were Khambas were sent to Gansu.

**Q:** In Lhasa, the population was about 30,000, right?

**A:** Yes, many people were arrested and brought from outside, like from Lhoka and Nagchu.

**A:** TT: When we were there, the Tibetan soldiers who were said to be from the Gadang [Shigatse] Regiment came and they were practicing military drills.

**A:** There were also soldiers brought from Shigatse.

**Q:** The Gadang Regiment didn't fight.

**A:** They didn't do anything. The Regimental Commander, Depön, was Numa and he told them to surrender.

**A:** TT: There were about 500 soldiers from the Gadang Regiment.

**A:** When we were sent to Kongpo in the 12th Tibetan month, there were about 500 people. There were Tibetan soldiers, monks and ordinary laymen. We were left in Bayi in Nyintri [Tib. nyi khri] County.

**Q:** Did you work on the fields?

**A:** At that time, there weren't any fields. The place was full of forest. Each 5 people were made to dig out 5 trees per day.

**Q:** Actually, each person had to dig out one tree, right?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** How thick were they?

**A:** Very thick.

**Q:** You just had to dig out the roots, right?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** How could you do that?

**A:** At that time, we didn't know how to do that. Later, we could dig out the roots using a hoe and then pull the tree with ropes. On the next days, then we had to cut them and burn them because we had to make fields and build factories.

**Q:** Actually, the timber was to be transported, right?

**A:** At that time, they didn't have trucks to transport them. We burned all the trees in the areas where the Wool Mill [Tib. 'khel 'thag bzo grwa] was built. Many people died from starvation.

**Q:** What food did they give you per day?

**A:** They just roasted wheat in iron pans and ground it with the a grinding stone.

**Q:** There wasn't barley, right?

**A:** Shit! Where could we find barley. Each person had 24 jin of tsamba per month.

**Q:** You didn't even have one jin per day, right?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** TT: When I was in prison, they said the tsamba we got was 24 jin.

**A:** We were living outside, so it was okay, because we could eat some grass and any kind of wild plants in summer. All of the prisoners in the dzongs were brought to Nyintri. It was called The 7th Brigade for Subjecting Somebody to Discipline [Ch. guan jiao qi dui]. From among these, every day 15-20 prisoners died from starvation.

**Q:** Were those Tibetans?

**A:** Yes. All of them were Tibetans. When a prisoner died, 12 prisoners were made to drag one corpse in a rug. When they dragged the corpse, they fell down.

**Q:** The prisoners who dragged the corpse were also of the 7th Brigade, right?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** They were very weak, so they couldn't drag corpse, right?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** What kind of people were there in the 7th Brigade?

**A:** They were the people from all the dzongs including Chamdo who had positions like us. and kinds of treasurers/managers [Tib. chandzö]. They were kind of heads [Tib. dpon po] who didn't like the Chinese. In that place, a large number of prisoners died.

**Q:** Were there aristocrats in Kongpo?

**A:** There wasn't a single aristocrat.

**A:** TT: I never heard that there were aristocrats there.

**Q:** So, where did they send the aristocrats?

**A:** They were sent to the Military Headquarters and everywhere like Sangyibnang [Tib. gsang yibs nang] and those prisons.

**A:** TT: I heard that the Kudraks were treated better in terms of food and the cost for their food was 1 yuan per day. When I was shut up in Sangyibnang, the cost of the food was also 1 yuan. In that prison, most of the prisoners were Kudrak.

**Q:** While you were in Kongpo, you were not a prisoner, but you had to work, right?

**A:** Yes, I was a member of the labor camp.

**Q:** How many years did you stay like that?

**A:** I stayed for three years. Then I stayed in Nangkartse [Tib. snang dkar rtse] for three years.

**Q:** TT: I also was there in Nangkartse.

**A:** Then, I went to Gyantse [Tib. rgyal rtse] and stayed there the longest time. After that, I stayed in Sakya [Tib. sa skya] on the State Farm.

**Q:** Wasn't that the Military Headquarters' State Farm [Ch. jun qu nong chang]?

**A:** Yes.

**A:** TT: At that time, all of the prisoners belonged to the army. So they just pushed us to the State Farms that belonged to the Junqu (Military Headquarters).

**Q:** Were the members of the labor camp allowed to get married?

**A:** Yes, we were allowed to.

**Q:** If you got married, were you allowed to work with your wife?

**A:** Yes. I also took my wife there. I was appointed as the Platoon Leader (Tib. shelngo [zhal ngo] or dingpön; Ch. qu dui zhang).

**Q:** How many people were there in your platoon?

**A:** There were probably 50-60 people.

**A:** TT: There were about 70 people under a Dingpön.

**Q:** They didn't appoint you as the Dingpön right after you arrived there, right?

**A:** This was also appointed by my friend Tshongkhang Sarpa [Tib. tshong khang gsar pa].

**Q:** Who was Tshongkhang Sarpa?

**A:** She was your relative Yudron La [Tib. g.yu sgron lags].

**Q:** TT: Oh! I see. She was the wife of Lobsang Nyima [Tib. blo bzang nyi ma] who was then a cadre, and he was carrying a gun, right?

**A:** Yes, he was the gyagpön [leader of the unit of a hundred].

**Q:** When you were working as a laborer, did you have the right to ask for leave to go to Lhasa to do something?

**A:** We had the right, but it was difficult to get it granted. When there was some urgent matter like when someone's parents, spouses or children died, they would grant the leave. When we were there, we used to make shoes from oak trees [Tib. ber do] for turning over the soil. One person should turn over one Mu of land per day. I swear by the Three Jewels, that it was like this. Not only turning over, but we also had to smash the lumps of earth. We had to work from dawn until we had the whole set of stars [finished their quota].

**Q:** If you couldn't finish it, you couldn't go back, right?

**A:** Yes, because the work quota was added to each other. If one couldn't finish it on the day, he had to do it on the next day along with the next day's quota.

**Q:** What food did you get?

**A:** We got tsamba, and there was tea boiled in common and there was a cook. We used to put the wheat tsamba in tins and add some tea and boil it again and it become a little more like paste. Then we ate it. When peaches were grown, we smashed the peaches and mixed it with tsamba and ate it. The prisoners used to pick up the white worms with red heads from the earth and eat them. A very large number of prisoners died from starvation. At that time, there were many dogs who ate the corpses and they became fat and they didn't let people pass by.

**Q:** TT: My relative Sithar Phüntso [Tib. sri thar phun tshogs] also was said to have died from starvation in 1965-66.

**A:** I am sure he did.

**Q:** TT: He was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment. If he hadn't died, he would have come out early.

**A:** Later, the liar [cadre] announced that the Senior Brigade Leader [Tib. da duizhang] of the prisoners was a spy of the Guomindang, so he made the prisoners die from starvation. Actually, he himself killed the people.

**Q:** What was his name?

**A:** Who knows. He was a Chinese man. We just called him Da Duizhang.

**A:** TT: I heard that at that time, most prisoners who died were from Kham, Tsang and Lhoka. The people from Lhasa were tough and they didn't do much work because they didn't enough have food to eat. The Khambas didn't know that.

**A:** If someone had a woolen chupa, they would sell it for one small Bo of tsamba. I had two Zi [jewelery stone] of my wife Thöndrup Drolma, one with two eyes and one with three eyes. I sold them for 3 khe of flour. It was well done.

**A:** TT: You are right because it saved your life.

**Q:** In 1958, when they held the meeting called, "Mollifying the Central Committee and to cease the Khamba's disturbance." did you serve tea at the meeting?

**A:** No, I didn't. They held a lot of meetings. At some of the meetings, the monk officials also served tea.